

Rainbow Reveille

August 2005

Volume 1, Issue 6

Iraqis learn
to support
themselves

TASK FORCE

LIBERTY

NEVER

FORGET

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Capt. Todd Van Orsdel, a civil affairs team leader for Company C, 445th Civil Affairs Battalion, and native of Minneapolis, hands a lollipop to an Iraqi child Aug. 10, in Diyala Province. (Photo by Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson/22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)



On the cover

An Iraqi army soldier takes notes while receiving an operations order during a class at the Diyala Regional Training Facility at Forward Operating Base Normandy, Muqdadiyah, Iraq. (Photo illustration by Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson/22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)



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Iraqi partners continue to make strides

Task Force Liberty has entered the third quarter of our mission and much is at stake. Together with our Iraqi army partners, we've spent months helping to prepare, equip, train, mentor and fight alongside Iraqi army platoons and companies as the Iraqi military begins to build its combat formations and assume the fight here in North-Central Iraq.

In some areas, we have made great progress. In Diyala Province, Iraqi soldiers from the 5th Division's 2nd Brigade conducted Operation Sunrise (Shuruk al Shems) in order to maintain pressure on insurgent forces in the area of Burhriz. The operations extended over many weeks with both independent Iraqi combat operations and joint operations with our 3rd Brigade Combat Team.

Our Iraqi army partners now conduct more than half of the counterinsurgency fight. They do these combat missions either jointly with our units or independently. From patrols to raids to traffic checkpoints, we can see the improvements in our Iraqi Security Force partners. The efforts of our Soldiers and our embedded transition teams



Maj. Gen. Joseph J. Taluto

continue to result in progress for Iraqi army forces across North-Central Iraq.

Part of that progress contributed to the restructuring of our forces and forward operating bases. In July and August we transferred three bases to the control of Iraqi army units and relocated our Soldiers to other bases.

As we continue our mission to put pressure on the insurgency and build on the growing success of the Iraqi Security Forces, the people of Iraq will

have an opportunity to review and discuss the proposed constitution for their country. The Iraqi constitution represents the framework for law and government for the Iraqi people. We welcome that dialogue and prepare to support the Iraqi people as they prepare for their referendum vote.

Across our area of operations, efforts such as these continue to gain momentum. With sufficient time, training and equipment, we will see more Iraqi army battalion and brigade operations, leading up to the Iraqi security operations for the constitutional referendum and permanent government votes later this year.

Keep up our pressure on the insurgency; give them no opportunity to plan or prepare for their terrorist attacks. Be aggressive and be vigilant.

The work we do in Task Force Liberty makes a difference in Iraq. The defense of freedom here gives the people of Iraq an opportunity to choose their own future while securing a future for our loved ones and families at home.

NEVER FORGET!

Liberty 6

Remain safe, focused as we help Iraqis

It's been seven months since our transfer of authority with the 1st Infantry Division, and the Soldiers of Task Force Liberty continue to make a significant impact in improving their areas of operation. We continue to spend countless man-hours training and organizing the Iraqi Security Forces at all levels to enable them to assume the mission of securing their country. We are the shield which will allow them to accomplish this.

We are assisting the Iraqis in rebuilding an infrastructure that is suffering more from the former regime's neglect than damage from war. Every project we start puts Iraqis to work, and every project we finish improves their quality of life.

Sometimes it may be difficult to see the improvements in our own area of operations, because everyday you are out there and change is slow and steady, but subtle. If you have the opportunity to travel the entire Task Force Liberty



Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Fearnside

area of operations the change is more pronounced and impressive. Every one of the provinces that our Task Force covers down on has received massive amounts of aid, projects and technical assistance which have contributed to the improvement in the everyday quality of life for each Iraqi citizen. Most

importantly, every one of you have made a huge impact in changing life for the better for the Iraqi people. Your treatment of all Iraqis with dignity and respect as members of the greatest army in the world and ambassadors of the United States has said it all.

As time grows short in our deployment, we all must continue to improve in everything we do. We must stay focused and SAFE and follow the guidance and instructions of our officers and non-commissioned officers. As I've said many times before, good leadership, standards, and self-discipline will see you all through this deployment without fail. Do not let yourself and your unit down. Every one of you has made a difference here, and I expect all of you to lean forward and continue to make a difference. You are on the frontline of the war on terrorism and you are succeeding.

NEVER FORGET!

Liberty 7

3-116 Soldiers use Iraqi tip, find, destroy cache



Staff Sgt. Johnny Palmer, squad leader, Company B, 3rd Battalion, 116th Armor, hand carries unexploded ordnance at a site inside the city of Kirkuk, Iraq. A bulldozer works in the background, unearthing more munitions.

Story, photos by Spc. Adam Phelps
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, Kirkuk, Iraq – Task Force Liberty Soldiers dug through a quarry that looked like it had been there for decades, searching for explosive devices in Kirkuk, Iraq, July 1 after receiving a tip by a local villager.

It didn't take Soldiers long to dig up more than 70 rounds by hand, with the premise that more were buried in the same area.

Of the 470 munitions found, it only takes one to destroy a humvee, said 1st Lt. John Thew, tank commander, Company B, 3rd Battalion, 116th Armor, and native Cove, Ore.

By finding almost 500 munitions, explosive ordnance disposal personnel save more than just military property, they also save human lives.

Iraq has lost more than 16,000 civilians due to these bombs, Thew said.

"We have found in one day, what usually takes four months," he added.

"The other night we got called at 11:30 p.m. from a man that wanted to show us where some bombs were," Thew said. "We followed him out to the site in the middle of the night and he pointed to some rounds. After assessing the situation, we realized it was more than we were going to be able to deal with that night."

The 116th had to secure the site until morning, so they called in the Iraqi police. The IP guarded the cache until morning, when the explosive ordnance disposal team arrived.

"The IP were very helpful, they were working the shovels with us, and participating anyway they could," said Air Force Staff Sgt. Michael Becker, 506th Air Expeditionary Group, EOD, and native of Warrensburg, Mont. "Most of the rounds were in a good, safe condition. We were comfortable with letting Army security, IP and civilians working heavy equipment help gather them."

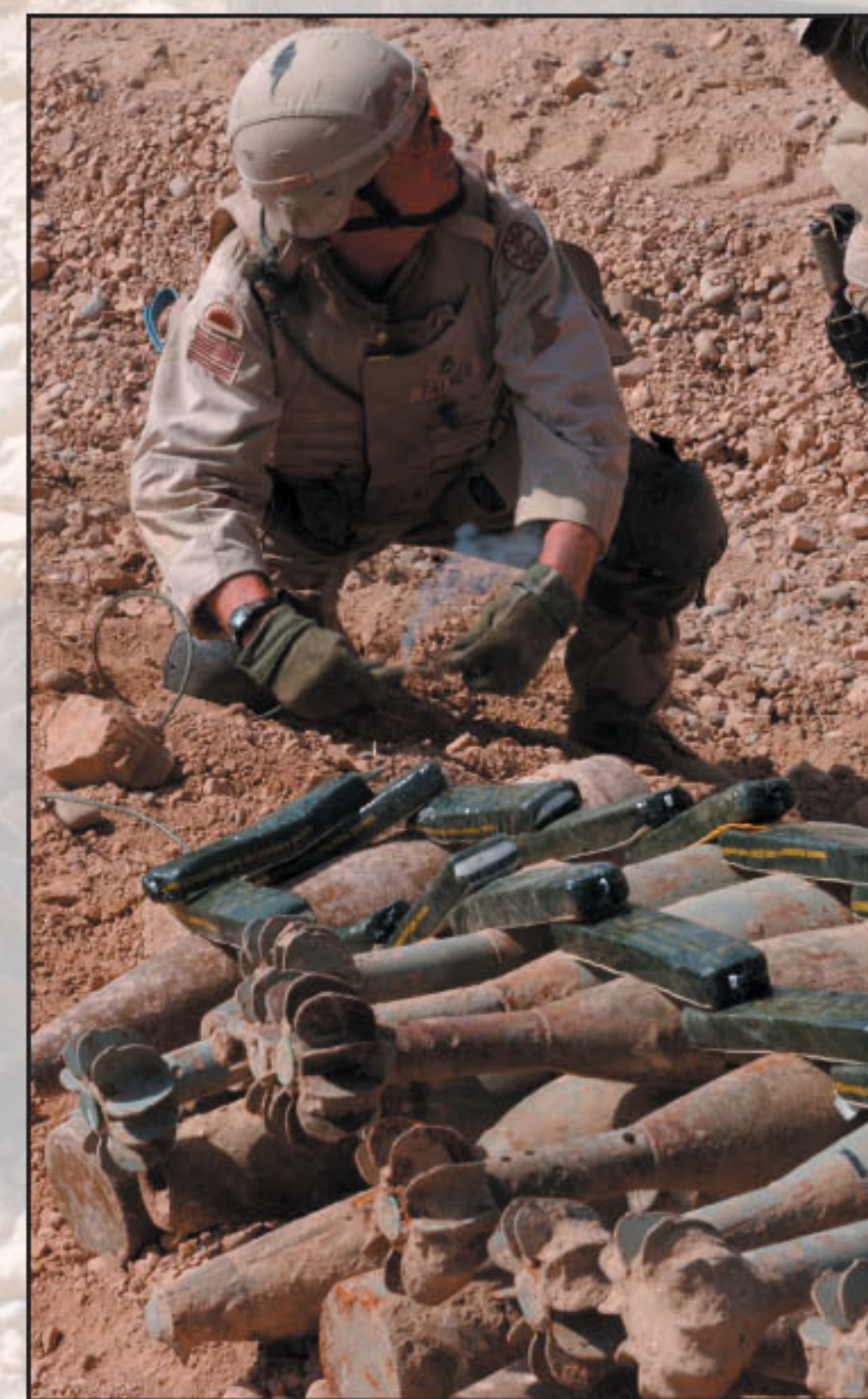
EOD doesn't normally let them do that, Becker added.

The more weapons caches that are destroyed, it puts a dent in the improvised explosive device threat, Becker said.

"Finds like this are important. We've seen signs that terrorists are running low on ordnance to use on roadside improvised explosive devices and vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attacks," said Becker. "This makes it harder for them, especially when we take out a major weapons cache."

This is the biggest find for the 3-116, hopefully, this can be attributed to saving many lives and combat equipment in the area of Kirkuk, Thew said.

"The job they are doing here is outstanding," Becker said. "I've seen nothing but professionalism and excellence in their job so far."



Staff Sgt. Johnny Palmer, squad leader, Company B, 3rd Battalion, 116th Armor, pulls the fuse to detonate munitions found after an Iraqi citizen called in a tip.

Knock, knock

116th BCT conducts knock and greet missions with IP

Story, photo by
Staff Sgt. Duane M. Brown
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, Kirkuk, Iraq – Task Force Liberty Soldiers from Forward Operating Base Warrior and Iraqi police officers work together in the village of Dugmat 1, near Kirkuk, Iraq, conducting “Knock and Greet” missions searching for material used by insurgent forces.

On these types of missions, Company B, 3rd Battalion, 116th Armor, Soldiers and IP build relations with the Iraqi people and systematically eliminate villages as potential hot spots.

During this operation, 3-116 is present to pull security while IP search for insurgents, weapons caches and any type of literature or graffiti pertaining to Coalition Forces. As a security element, Coalition troops set up an outer cordon to make sure no one comes in the village and an inner cordon to keep anyone from leaving.

An Iraqi law states that each Iraqi citizen is authorized to possess one AK-47 assault rifle with one magazine or one pistol, for self defense, but under no circumstances are they to have rocket-propelled grenades, extra ammunition or explosive material.

When items are confiscated, they are given a receipt so they can get it back, if the situation war-

rants.

“If anything is found that is beyond reason, we confiscate it and detain the individual, said Lt. John Paul Thew, platoon leader.

The 116th Brigade Combat Team realizes Iraqi culture is very different to that of the U.S. To make the villagers comfortable with the operation, Soldiers get the Muktar, a highly respected member of the community, and have him politely ask people if they can search their homes, said Lt. Jeffrey D. Clements, executive officer, Company B, 3-116, and native of Hermiston, Ore..

“We don’t like to come into a village kicking in doors,” said Clements. “We just knock on the door and ask if we can come in and look for contraband.”

Local villagers are usually peaceful and very helpful, Clements added.

“We try and respect their belongings as much as we can and not just bust in and tear up their homes,” said Staff Sgt. Johnny Palmer, Company B squad leader, and na-

tive of Buhe Valley, Calif.

Interpreters also accompany Soldiers to help keep villagers informed of what is going on.

We keep in mind that not everyone is against what we are doing here, and that many realize that we are here for their safety, Palmer said.

Iraqi police and the 116th Soldiers always give villagers a chance to be honest.

“When we find stuff they said wasn’t there, they are obviously lying,” Thew said. “Because of this type of behavior, we become more aggressive in our search procedures.”

When a village is searched and nothing was found, it doesn’t mean the mission was a waste of time.

“Even with no arrests or unauthorized items, the mission was still a success,” Thew said. “We now know nobody in this town has improvised explosive device material and we can focus our resources somewhere else.”



Staff Sgt. Johnny Palmer, squad leader, Company B, 3rd, Battalion, 116th Armored Cavalry, takes the time during a knock and greet mission to speak with locals about any suspicious activity in the village of Dugmat 1, near Kirkuk, Iraq.

Cav, IA Soldiers work together, build bond to accomplish mission

by Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.
1st BCT Public Affairs

BALAD, Iraq – When the Coalition Forces first took on the responsibility of training Iraqi Security Forces to take charge of their own country, there was much to be taught. In the time since Troop B, 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, has been stationed at Forward Operating Base Paliwoda, it has seen much progress in the performance of Iraqi Army troops while out on missions.

Troopers from 5-7 Cav. have been involved in almost daily missions with the Iraqi army, and said the IA is capable of handling missions with little or no help from Coalition Forces.

“With the raid this morning, the IA pretty much planned everything,” said Sgt. Pashaune Henson, a B Troop, 5-7 Cav. team leader. “We just did a kind of overwatch to make sure they didn’t get hurt. They’re performing a lot better than when we first started. They’ve improved on their searching techniques, and the way they

treat civilians when they’re going through the houses. When they first started, they would just run through the house real quick. To us, that wasn’t really searching, so we had to slow them down and make sure they did a proper search.”

When 5-7 Cav. first arrived, there were many changes that had to be made, including removing some of the soldiers in the unit the cavalrymen believed could be a threat to the progress of the mission, said Capt. Ralph Elder, Troop B, 5-7 Cav. commander.

After rearranging a few things, the cavalrymen saw the diamond in the rough. Over time the IA soldiers grew into a force to be reckoned with.

“When we first got here, the IA knew what their job was, but they weren’t real organized,” said Pfc. Levi Malnar, a Troop B, 5-7 Cav., dismount from Winchester, Calif.

“There were probably 10 guys that knew what was going on, and the rest of them did guard and checkpoints. Since we’ve been here we’ve managed to get to where we have platoons that go out with our platoons. They have more weapons, more flak vests and stuff. They want to make their country safer. They are getting better, and in return Iraq is getting better.”

“As the months have gone on, they have progressed a lot,

they’ve learned the mission, they’re more motivated and organized,” said Pfc. Eric Souders a Troop B, 5-7 Cav. dismount from Mechanicsville, Md. “They don’t look to us to know what to do.”

The biggest issue was building a bond between the cavalrymen and the IA soldiers. Elder had an idea from the beginning to help build that bond. So far it has paid off, he said.

“When we took control, we took our troop out to their compound and moved in for 10 days, and pretty much worked with them 24 hours a day,” Elder said. “We had Iraqis guarding us while we slept. It built a bond to where some of my guys and (the Iraqi soldiers) are almost like brothers. There’s a big trust factor built between us and that company out there. It’s to the point

now where if I dismount on an objective, and I start walking around looking at things, next thing I know there are six Iraqi soldiers in a box around me helping me.”

By gaining the trust factor, the cavalrymen have been able to accomplish things they normally wouldn’t by themselves. It is obvious that the cavalrymen and the IA soldiers care about each other and the mission. One of the biggest hurdles was learning to understand the culture of the people the troopers were working with. That is where

the IA comes in; the soldiers know the culture, and can bridge the gap between the Coalition Forces and the local nationals.

“We are able to effectively complete missions with minimum manning,” Elder said. “It’s important because you get them to take responsibility for their own country. We can never successfully fight an insurgency if we don’t actually know the culture. A lot of Americans tend not to understand the Arabic culture. Understanding the culture is something (the IA soldiers) do very well. They grew up in the area, and they are able to put that Iraqi face on your operations. We had a period where we found four caches in one week. We didn’t find it because of our intelligence; we found it because they came to us with their informants and said ‘we know where a cache is.’”

Malnar said while he is happy to be helping the Iraqis, there are challenges to being in a foreign country as a security force.

“The hardest part about being here is getting the Iraqi people as a whole to trust you,” Malnar said. “They don’t want to believe that we just want to make Iraq safer for them. They think we are over here to loot and pillage, and that is not the case at all. We want to go home, and the only way we can go home is to make Iraq a safer place. The bottom line is we are trying to help the Iraqi people.”



“We had Iraqis guarding us while we slept. It built a bond to where some of my guys and (the Iraqi soldiers) are almost like brothers.”

**Capt. Ralph Elder
Commander
Troop B, 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment**

Coordination center opens in Tikrit

Story, photo by
Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.
1st BCT Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DAGGER, Tikrit, Iraq -- Leaders of Salah ad Din Province and the 1st Brigade Combat Team attended a ceremony for the opening of the new Provincial Joint Coordination Center in Tikrit, Iraq, July 11.

The new building will be a center for government operations in the province, such as maintaining communications about current operations with numerous state institutions and supporting Joint Coordination Centers, said the center's director Gen. Eissa Abid Mohmood.

"Our center coordinates with humanitarian organizations and health companies to help the damaged areas of Baiji and Samarra," Mohmood said. "Also, the most important duty of the center is connecting with the national center in Baghdad, which is considered the supervisor of all JCCs in Iraq. It coordinates between Coalition Forces and government agencies in the province to establish security in our nation."

The contractor responsible for the building's completion expressed pride in having taken part in the construction of the project.

"When we started working on this building, which was the old Al-Hummayat Hospital, much effort was needed because there was much debris and the building's body presented a bad situation," said contractor Ziad Ibrahim Jasim. "Much hard work was needed for us to complete the request to finish the building in such a limited time. Most days there were up to 100 workers, but impossible things can be done by men who want it done."

A Task Force Liberty Soldier said the opening of the new center is not only seen in a practical sense; this center is a symbol for good things to come and the fruit of joint efforts between the Iraqis and the Coalition Forces.

"It shows that there is a successful project completed by the



Salah ad Din Province Deputy Governor Abdullah Al-Jubori cuts the ribbon to the new Provincial Joint Coordination Center as the director, Gen. Eissa Abid Mohmood, and 1st Brigade Combat Team commander Col. Mark McKnight, second from left, look on in Tikrit July 11.

"Much hard work was needed for us to complete the request to finish the building in such a limited time. Most days there were up to 100 workers, but impossible things can be done by men who want it done."

Ziad Ibrahim Jasim
Iraqi Building Contractor

Iraqis with little assistance from Coalition Forces," said Capt. Zach Szilagyi, assistant Iraqi political liaison attached to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st BCT. "It also shows the Iraqis have the will and the spirit to make their country whole and successful. This project is the perfect example of overall how those philosophies can come together and create quantifiable product of the efforts of the Coalition and the Iraqis working together."

The center was attacked recently by a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device which halted construction. After rallying the workers to the importance of the project, Coalition Forces and the Iraqi provincial government were able to get the project back on track.

"Due to the security situation and the attack of the compound, the contractor had to stall on the construction because there were many workers who were afraid for their lives and their families' lives," Szilagyi said. "It put our construction

timeline two months behind schedule. I, as well as General Eissa, felt the need to pressure the contractor to get the project done as soon as possible as a morale booster to show the province that despite the killings and violence, there are stories of success throughout the province for the people."

IA conducts independent mission in Tikrit

Story, photos by
Sgt. Matthew Acosta
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DANGER, Tikrit, Iraq- "I thank Coalition Forces for all you have done for us, training and conditioning my men to get them where they are now- able to plan and execute independent operations," said Col. Dakhal Hassan Mohmoud, commander, 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade, 4th Iraqi Army Division.

Since the war in Iraq began, Iraqis have been aiding in the war on terror, providing intelligence to Coalition Forces as well as taking an active part enlisting in the new Iraqi army; some of them soldiers from the former regime.

Iraqi Army soldiers have now become proficient in conducting combat operations, and executed an operation using a battalion of Iraqi troops Aug. 16.

"Due to intensive training by American forces, the 1st Bn., 1st Bde., soldiers are now proficient enough to plan and conduct independent operations on the battalion level," said Lt. Col. Todd Wood, commander, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Liberty.

These Iraqi soldiers have been training and conducting operations combined with Coalition Forces since the effort to stand up the Iraqi army began. While developing into a fighting force, they were working toward training, planning and conducting independent operations as part of handing over the country's security from Coalition Forces to the Iraqi army.

"The battalion developed a list of people they wanted to question," Wood said. "They

also developed a plan of action, rehearsed the mission and executed the mission successfully, according to the plan."

The Iraqi army intelligence personnel began gathering intelligence on terrorist activity in and around the main and alternate supply routes in Tikrit.

"According to our intelligence sources, the target was a neighborhood where several old regime Iraqi army officers lived who are suspected of planting improvised explosive devices on the main supply routes," said Iraqi army Capt. Mueen Shehan, intelligence officer for 1st Battalion.

For the first time since the war started, an Iraqi battalion-sized element conducted independent operations backed up by Coalition airpower and fire support.

"They haven't developed artillery assets yet," Wood said. "And they couldn't communicate with the air support so if they needed that support, they would have coordinated that through our (liaison officers)."

Wood said they compiled a list of 10 personnel they were looking to detain, and because of the swift execution of the operation they were able to get information on eight of the suspects, and detained the other two. They also confiscated several weapons during the operation.

The operation started early Aug. 16, and successfully ended a few hours later with no reported injuries to personnel, or damage to private property.

After the operation all 38 Iraqi vehicles and 375 Iraqi soldiers paraded through Tikrit, showing the people they were a formidable force that could protect the people and inspire their confidence in a unit that lives in the city they operate in, Wood said.

"We wanted to show (the terrorists) who was in power," said Dakhal.

Coalition Forces agreed on



Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade, 4th Iraqi Army Division, distribute food, toys and supplies to the people of Tikrit, Iraq, building a relationship with the people.

the historical significance of the day. "(The parade) was a great display because any previous mission the Iraqis conducted were of smaller elements and usually at night when no one could witness," Wood said. "And I'm sure it had a positive impact on the people of Tikrit as well as any of the folks out there that are involved in terrorist activity."

The Iraqi soldiers continued to celebrate by hosting a celebratory lunch where the soldiers discussed the mission and what a huge historical event for this was for them.

The Iraqi battalion will continue to conduct company and battalion-level operations within Tikrit and surrounding areas in an effort to keep terrorists at bay.

"This operation is just the start of the Iraqis taking over," Dakhal said. "And we will not (allow) any insurgents to enter Tikrit. They will not operate freely or they will be in danger."

Dakhal said since Iraqi soldiers have been involved more with the people of Tikrit, they have been very helpful with intelligence information on terrorist activity and have even asked the soldiers for assistance in dealing with personal problems.

He added that without the support from locals, they would have "a more difficult time finding success."

"Everyone will remember this day," Dakhal said. "Finally today we see what all the hard training (the 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry has) done for us; thank you (Lt.) Col. Wood, for this great day to celebrate."



Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade, 4th Iraqi Army Division, use a map to assist in locating one of the three objectives during the battalion's first independent operation, Aug. 16, in Tikrit, Iraq.

Rebuilding Iraq, one province at a time

Story, photos by Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE NORMANDY, Iraq – Task Force Liberty Soldiers are providing Iraqis with money to improve their way of life, and in order to ensure projects like the ones in Diyala Province are progressing on schedule, Soldiers conduct routine checks of these sites.

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, are working with the people of Diyala Province to build schools, improve the water supply, pave roads and rebuild their local government.

The work the Soldiers are doing is helping to rebuild the city services, said 1st Lt. Jeremy Krueger, civil military operations officer, and native of Pensacola, Fla.

"I think the projects in our (area of operations) are important," Krueger said. "What we are doing is improving the infrastructure for this whole area that has been torn down over the last several years. It's helping the population immensely. It is providing new schools for them, new roads, new water projects, water supplies that they have never had, and also some of the projects are businesses that are going to provide some revenue for the area."

The unit is still working on developing more projects in order to better the area, said Sgt. Maj. Matthew J. West, civil military operations sergeant major and a native of Dallas.

"Currently we've got 83 projects that have been submitted or currently working," West said. "Out of those we have a variety of different types of projects. The majority of our projects right now (include) anywhere from 35 to 40 schools that are being rebuilt. We have a lot of water projects through three of our major cities and also sewage projects, which are probably the next highest big money projects that we are working right now."

Krueger said he believes they are making progress with the people of Diyala Province.

"We get a lot of support from cities and even with a lot of the individual residents," he said. "We get a lot of positive feedback when we go out and do some of these projects and inspect them."

Part of the unit's job is to help local leaders learn how to develop their infrastructure and run operations on their own, Krueger said.

"Every day that we go out and interact with the local governments, the city councils, and try to show them that we are there to help and at the same time teach them how to solve problems and provide solutions on their own with less and less of our help," Krueger said.

The democratic government is working well in



Iraqis work to build a school in Diyala Province. Coalition Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry, Task Force Liberty, are working with the people of Diyala Province to build schools, improve the water supply, pave roads and rebuild their local government.

the area, West said.

"The individuals know they have a right to vote," West said. "They are working on voting registration right now and with the upcoming elections between October and December time frame,

I think we are going to have a good turn out. People understand that democracy in this area is going to be the road ahead."

West said he believes they are able to help the Iraqis rebuild their cities because they are taking notice of the steps that need to be taken for the province's future.

"I think the key thing is understanding where these people are at and where they need to go," West said. "I think the best thing that we do is our engagements that we do five times a week with the different city councils. We ensure they're managing the city in an appropriate fashion, they're understanding the democratic process and also we ensure that these projects are being accomplished to benefit the people of the Diyala Province."



1st Lt. Jeremy Krueger, civil military operations officer, Task Force 1-30, talks with a local leader about a road project.

The Diyala Regional Training Facility develops Iraqi Army Officers, NCOs into...

CAPABLE COMBAT LEADERS

Story, photos by
Sgt. Daniel W. Bailey
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE NORMANDY, Muqadadiyah, Iraq – Task Force Liberty Soldiers are working with the Iraqi army to develop more proficient combat leaders capable of leading troops in the fight against terrorists.

In the Combat Leaders Course at the Diyala Regional Training Facility on Forward Operating Base Normandy, 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry, Soldiers work with their Iraqi counterparts to train soldiers from the Iraqi Army's 5th Division to be better battlefield leaders.

Training during the 14-day course helps build on the Iraqi soldiers' basic military knowledge and skills, said Staff Sgt. Lloyd Pegues, the senior Coalition Forces' instructor at the CLC.

"We train the platoon sergeants, platoon leaders and company leadership to be able to take control and make decisions," said Pegues, a native of St. Louis. "We do this

by taking what they already know and then building on their knowledge base of tactics, leadership combat tactics and general leadership skills."

Pegues added that most of the instruction is performed by a cadre of Iraqi soldiers. Coalition Soldiers are more supervisors, observing and instructing when needed.

The training has been good, but there have been a couple of stumbling blocks, Pegues said.

"At first, the platoons were trying to figure out whether we were going to cater our training to the way they fight," he said, "but as we get different intel from our battalion and brigade and as the enemy changes the way they fight we change the way we train so it can be confusing sometimes."

The soldiers are glad to be receiving the training and feel they will benefit on future missions, said an Iraqi platoon sergeant going through the course.

"Before this training we did all missions perfectly, but this training makes us better for our next missions," said Sgt.

Gasem Abed, with Company D, 4th Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 5th IA Division. "For example, we need new information about military things that make the soldiers better in the future."

Another Iraqi squad leader from Company D said he feels that the training is good because a lot of his soldiers want to fight as they did under the old regime and feels the new tactics will better help them defeat any enemy of Iraq.

"It's good training for the



An instructor of the Combat Leaders Course at the Diyala Regional Training Facility on FOB Normandy, Iraq, uses a sand table to outline the details of a mission Aug. 3.

soldiers with the new army," said Sgt. Saeif Salman. "We should use the new system because it is better to fight the enemy of this country."

Pegues said he has seen the fruits of his labor first hand and feels that the Iraqi soldiers are starting to come together as a whole.

"We do convoys outside the gate and a couple of times I've seen guys we've trained working at checkpoints doing the right things," he said. "They are alert, pulling security, performing searches and showing courtesy to the Iraqi people."

"The soldiers themselves are motivated, dedicated and they want to do the right thing and I think as long as they train each other and understand they've got to do this to win the war against terrorism they'll make it," Pegues added.



Squad leaders with Company D, 4th Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 5th Division of the Iraqi Army, watch and take notes as their platoon sergeant outlines their up-coming mission using a sand table at the Diyala Regional Training Facility on Forward Operating Base Normandy Aug 3.

TF 1-30 Soldiers recon, check on polling sites

Story, photo by Sgt. Daniel W. Bailey
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE NORMANDY, Muqadiyah, Iraq –To ensure Iraqis in Diyala Province are confident they can vote safely for the upcoming constitutional referendum and the December national elections, Task Force Liberty Soldiers are keeping a close eye on the polling stations to make sure everything runs smoothly.

With the start of voter registration, Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor Regiment, and 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, stopped by five polling stations near Forward Operating Base Normandy Aug. 4.

The polling stations visited were in Dali Abbas, Muqadiyah, Abu Sayda and Al-Wajhiya.

The purpose of the mission was to make sure everything was under control by checking on security and addressing any concerns of the Iraqi election personnel. said 1st Lt. Daniel Brillhart, executive officer, Company B, 2nd Battalion, 34th Armored Regiment.

"Everything that we saw was very positive," said Brillhart, a native of York, Pa. "Iraqis were prepared to conduct the registration, and Iraqi security forces had the scene secured at each location we went to, showing they don't need extensive coalition involvement to

"They talked to us in areas that were neutral and out away from the actual registration areas."

**1st Lt. Daniel Brillhart,
acting commander
Company B, 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor Regiment**

set this off without a hitch."

Sergeant First Class Brain Kerkove, 1-30th, feels this is a positive step towards Iraqis taking control of their country.

"They need to be able to feel confident enough to get out here and vote," said Kerkove, a native of Savvanna, Ill. "That way they can go ahead and continue on with the constitution process and the elections coming up so they can actually run their country without our help."

Brillhart said during the election process all security will be conducted by Iraqi police at the polling sites and Iraqi army in the vicinity as Coalition Forces are not allowed into the polling sites. His Soldiers will provide a safety net should any incidents occur, he added.

"We are in the wings with a large (quick reaction force) and able to react to any one of the locations should the need arise," he said. "Part of today's mission was a rehearsal of the routes to these locations."

At the polling sites Brillhart was pleased with the seriousness of which the election personnel enforced the rules.

"They didn't allow anyone inside the registration sites except to register, including the Coalition Forces that were there," said Brillhart. "They talked to us in areas that were neutral and out away from the actual registration areas, so it was good to see that they see the concept of the fair election and they're doing their best to abide by those rules."

After visiting the five polling stations Brillhart and his men are confident that the Iraqi people in Diyala Province are well on their way to building a better democratic Iraq.

"It shows they're taking the key first steps towards establishing a democracy, that they can elect their own leaders without interference and without aid from the Coalition."

New city emerges thanks to citizens, Coalition Soldiers

Story, photo
by Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE NORMANDY, Muqadiyah, Iraq – Coalition Soldiers are working to help Iraqis rebuild their country through rebuilding schools and forming a democratic government in Iraq.

However, some 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, Soldiers took it a step farther by helping locals turn their village into a town and elect the first-ever mayor of Hamrin, Iraq on July 20.

Khalid Ibrahim Khalif Aljaboori, Hamrin's new mayor, said he knows he has been given an important position and is honored by the election results.

"I feel very good and I hope to make everything safe for the people of this town," Khalif said. "I know this is a very hard mission, a hard job. I realize I represent the people here and they will help me with this mission."

Captain Mark Stoneman, native of High Point, N.C., and battery commander of Battery B, 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery Regiment, said supporting the town of Hamrin with the reconstruction and development process is part of his unit's mission and they want to make sure the people are being provided with the necessary services.

"The town of Hamrin has never had a mayor or any kind of elected official in its history and consequently they were getting left behind their neighbors in terms of development projects and basically just the reconstruction of the country and the democratic process," Stoneman said. "We suggested to them that it might be a good idea for them to elect a mayor, an elected official to represent the whole town."

Stoneman said the locals embraced the idea and began work to elect a mayor.

"They organized an election themselves and they asked us to observe that election to make sure it was fair and equitable," he said. "Basically, we just sat in the back and let them run with it and provided advice and assistance when they needed it."

Khalif said he despite not being at the



Captain Mark Stoneman, battery commander with Company B, 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery Regiment, Task Force 1-30, talks with Khalid Ibrahim Khalif Aljaboori, the first and newly elected mayor of Hamrin, Iraq.

same level as the surrounding towns, he still wants to work to better Hamrin.

"We try to make it more beautiful and a city with more services than towns around," Khalif said.

The Coalition Soldiers are working on projects that will do just that for the town, said Stoneman.

"We've sponsored a project to run water to every house in town and that project is pending approval at this time," he said. "We are also trying to rebuild some schools. There has been basically no money put in the town for about 15 years so schools are run down. Large parts of them are unusable so we're trying to fix that for them."

Khalif said local leaders talked to the government before about these problems, but would not receive any help. He said now the people of the town know that Stoneman and his Soldiers are here to help and are grateful for it.

"(Stoneman) feels about the people here and helped us to make this town," Khalif said. "He listens when the people here talk and he does what they want."

The Soldiers have other projects in the town that are waiting to be approved, and Stoneman said they are doing little things that will improve the town and relationships between Coalition Soldiers and the citizens of Hamrin.

"The smaller projects that we've been able to do, for example we were able to build a soccer field fairly cheaply and quickly, had an effect on the children in the town, because it gave them somewhere to play year-round," Stoneman said. "It's the same with rebuilding a school or running water pipes to everybody's house. If we are able to achieve that where Saddam Hussein's administration failed I think it would go a long way to giving them confidence in their new government and in us."

Khalif said he believes that when Coalition Soldiers leave the people of Hamrin will be able to continue keeping the town a safe and beautiful place to live, but for now they still need some help.

"We have the authority to do that," Khalif said. "We just need the support."

Stoneman agreed.

"I think they have already demonstrated that they are able to take over for themselves," he said. "They ran this election themselves; maybe 50 local Iraqi citizens organized and executed the elections. They ran the national elections in January and they maintain their own security pretty well."

"It is a fairly safe area," Stoneman said. "I am pretty confident that once we leave Hamrin will be able sustain itself as a safe and stable place to live."



1st Lt. Daniel Brillhart, executive officer, 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor Regiment talks with an Iraqi Police Officer outside a polling station in Al-Wajhiya, Iraq August 4, 2005. Brillhart was checking on the security levels at polling stations near Forward Operating Base Normandy as his unit will serve as a quick reaction force should anything happen during voter registration in August.

IA soldiers take another step toward independent operations

Story, photo by Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE GABE, Baqubah, Iraq – Maps line the walls as soldiers sit around a “U” shaped table briefing their commander on the mission plan and the intelligence they had gathered.

The commander, dressed in a uniform pattern once worn by U.S. troops and speaking in Arabic, talks to his fellow officers about his expectations, as a group of Soldiers dressed in the U.S. Army’s current desert combat uniform take notes.

Listening and mentoring is what these Coalition Soldiers of the military transition team at Forward Operating Base Gabe, Baqubah, Iraq, are doing to help their counterparts of the 2nd Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army Division, prepare to completely take over operations in their area.

Coalition Soldiers are not only providing advice, but they also lend a hand where the Iraqi army still needs help, said Lt. Col. Daniel Kessler, MiTT team leader.

“We support them with assets that they basically don’t have,” said Kessler, a Latrobe, Penn., native. “Right now there are very few operations in our (area of operation) that are Coalition led.”

The help the Coalition Soldiers provide isn’t something that Col. Saman Talabany, 2nd Brigade commander, said he wants to do without, but said his soldiers are ready to take over the mission when that day does come.

“When they leave we have a good capability to do everything, but I don’t like to say that because I’m not looking to when they leave,” Talabany said.

Kessler said he believes that Talabany and his soldiers are ready to take over the mission, because they have proven they are capable of carrying out these missions.

“(We believe) we’ve got one of the better Iraqi army brigades,” Kessler said. “We’ve got three of our battalions that are almost ready. Three of our battalions are actually executing independent

operations with minimal Coalition Forces’ support. I am not aware of another Iraqi army brigade that has the same level of proficiency as our battalions.”

Talabany said he has dedicated soldiers who know their mission is important and are willing to fight for the people of their country.



Col. Saman Talabany, commander 2nd Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army Division, and Lt. Col. Daniel Kessler, military transition team leader, listen to a briefing Aug. 10, at Forward Operating Base Gabe, Baqubah, Iraq.

“I have good soldiers,” he said. “I can say great soldiers, because they are all ready, they are ready to die for their country as you see in the missions all the time.”

Going out on these missions and getting information that may help the country and protect the soldiers is important, Talabany said, as he instructed his intelligence officer during the meeting.

“It is too easy to get information because we are the same color, same language, same cul-

ture with those guys and it is too easy to go inside the people to get information,” Talabany said. “I told him that he cannot get any information if you sit beside your air conditioner in your room. They have to go out and they have to speak to the people. They don’t have to wait for those people to come and tell them this information.”

That is just what these Iraqi soldiers are doing said Kessler, going out and making sure their country is a safe place to live.

“Our role, as a Coalition, is more into supporting the Iraqis, both the army and the police, as they basically start doing the brunt of all operations within our (area of operations),” Kessler said. “They are executing roughly three times as many operations in terms of cordon and searches, raids and executing flash checkpoints and other types of patrols, as Coalition Forces right now.”

Talabany said these missions are important, and that is why he and his soldiers know they can not just sit back and ignore the problems in their country.

“If we sit in our home, in our room, we have no problem with anyone, but when the soldiers go outside to do a mission or to do his job (there are) problems,” he said. “I feel that we have a problem, but we work it and it is too easy for us to fix it.”



Capt. Neil Orechowsky, civil military operations officer, 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery Regiment, discusses the locations of rebuilding projects in Baqubah, Iraq, with the mayor, Khalid Al-Sanjei Aug. 10.

TF 1-10 helps Iraqis build a brighter future in Baqubah

Story, photo by Sgt. Daniel W. Bailey
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE GABE, Baqubah, Iraq – Task Force Liberty Soldiers are working with Iraqi officials in Diyala Province to plan and produce projects that will improve the Iraqi peoples way of life.

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery Regiment, are helping to bring fresh drinking water, consistent electricity, paved roads and sewage systems to the city of Baqubah and its suburbs.

“We’re really focusing in on high-impact projects,” said Capt. Neil Orechowsky, civil military operations officer, 1-10, and a native of Philadelphia.

The projects are those that will impact the largest number of citizens, such as getting fresh water and sewage service to those who have never had them before, he said.

Orechowsky said he meets several times a week with political, economic and security leaders as well as Iraqi Security Forces to discuss project ideas and issues.

“It’s really an open forum discussion,” he said. “We come with what we see as our priorities and we try to gather what their priorities are and hopefully try to make

those two goals meet in the middle so we’re both accomplishing what we see is going to lead to success for the people of Iraq.”

Khalid Al-Sanjei, the mayor of Baqubah, said he is happy and excited to have the Coalition Forces working with him in the effort to repair and fix up the city.

“The work being done is very good because the people who work these issues, they work hard to help the Iraqis,” he said. “Now we are working to (provide) fresh water to the city of Tarear. Now for the first time, the citizens will have fresh water in summer time.”

In the past, most of the ideas for projects came from Coalition Soldiers but Iraqi officials are now learning what important projects are and how to get them accomplished, Orechowsky said.

“The military and Americans tend to think in a point A to point B fashion. We have a real set idea for where we want to go, what we want to do, what our long-term goals are and what are the short-term steps to get there,” he said. “As time has gone on, even in the last several months, a lot of political leaders have grasped a lot of these concepts and they’re taking more and more of a lead in taking ownership and responsibility for these ideas and also for their outcome.”

Staying out of the spotlight and keeping these projects Iraqi-driven is something the Coalition Forces are trying to do so the people can see their government working for them, Orechowsky said.

“We try and stay low visibility on the Coalition side and let the Iraqi leaders put an Iraqi face on these projects,” he said. “They go out there and make it happen and it’s been working.”

Working so well, according to Orechowsky, that, “we’ve got \$30 million in reconstruction projects done already this year, an additional \$30 million in funds obligated towards 90 projects in various levels of work and another 20 projects waiting for funding and another 20 that we’re drawing up the plans for.”

The mayor said he has high aspirations for Baqubah and believes that with the help of Coalition Forces his city will prosper.

“My temptation through my job is to see my city blossom into a beautiful city where all the people live in peace and it will be the center that all the people will look at,” said Al-Sanjei. “It will be green and peaceful, because this city deserves from the leadership to have it renovated and projects done for it.”

Big guns provide fire support

Story, photo by Sgt. Daniel W. Bailey
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE GABE, Baqubah, Iraq – When Coalition Forces are attacked anywhere near Baqubah, Task Force Liberty Soldiers reply with a loud and thunderous response from 155mm howitzers.

Soldiers of Company B, 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery Regiment, stand ready 24 hours a day, 7 days a week manning the M109A6 Paladin self-propelled howitzer to send rounds down range to support troops on the ground or to counter insurgents firing mortars.

“We are the primary fire support for Diyala Province,” said 1st Lt. Lee Slinker, 2nd platoon leader. “We perform counter-fire missions, terrain denial fires, illumination, basic artillery, planned fires and calls for fire.”

Slinker, a native of Louisville, Ala., said his unit also performs a unique mission to try and dissuade insurgent attacks in the area.

When Coalition Forces are attacked with a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device or an improvised explosive device in or around Baqubah, 1-10 will fire four rounds an hour for six hours a night into an empty palm grove just outside the city, explained Staff Sgt. Daniel Bates, a howitzer section chief and native of Dixon, Tenn.

“We have a standard operating procedure that anytime any of

our brigade gets hit with an IED we fire into a designated area to cause disruption on the city of Baqubah to disrupt their sleep time,” Bates said. “That way they learn if you mess with us you will pay, without causing any collateral damage.”

Bates said he believes firing into the palm groves is having a positive effect on the citizens of Baqubah working with Coalition Forces to root out terrorists.

“The people of Baqubah are finding out if they help us discover the IEDs early and we don’t come under attack by them, then we are willing to work with them and help them out,” Bates said.

Even though performing the palm groves mission means Coalition Forces were attacked, the Soldiers of 1-10 still enjoy their mission, said Sgt. Sederick Hill, a gunner and native of Longview, Texas.

“I love our mission,” Hill said. “Besides keeping the people of Baqubah up, it keeps us up too; plus it also sharpens our crew drills and helps build on our unit cohesion.”

Slinker said he is glad his Soldiers are actually performing their military occupational specialty while in Iraq and proud of how they accomplish their mission.

“The guys have been doing great,” Slinker said. “They’re well trained for it and they’re actually doing what (artillerymen) are supposed to do instead of being out pulling security on convoys.”



Specialist David Armendariz, cannoneer, Company B, 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery Regiment, closes the breach on his 155mm cannon inside a M109A6 Paladin self-propelled howitzer prior to firing at Forward Operating Base Gabe.

Coalition Soldiers help Iraqi leaders develop local government

Story, photo
by Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE GABE, Baqubah, Iraq – Coalition Soldiers sat back as local Iraqi leaders discussed issues of concern in the Al-Abarra area Aug. 11.

The meeting, at the Al-Abarra Government Building, brought together the members of the city council, the local Iraqi army commander and the Iraqi police chiefs from the area to discuss topics ranging from water to voting on Iraq’s new constitution.

The Coalition Soldiers’ job at these meetings has been to mentor the Iraqi leaders and provide advice on how they should operate, but recently the Soldiers have taken a back seat, said Capt. Jason Spencer, commander of Company C, 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor, and native of Tecumseh, Okla.

“Within the six months that we’ve been here it has been a pretty drastic change,” he said. “The Iraqis are handling a lot of the problems themselves and it is just kind of us going along with them for mentorship and to kind of guide them in the right direction.”

Staff Sgt. Anthony R. Franke, noncommissioned officer in charge of civil military operations for 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor, agreed that the city council has experienced a lot of growth.

“The city council meetings have progressed from being basically a group of guys who come together and gripe and complain about everything, to having an agenda and getting situations fixed or raising issues and coming up with solutions to their problems,” Franke said. “It has been very rewarding to watch this happen.”

City council members have come a long way, but one issue they still need to work on is informing the local Iraqis on their council successes, said Capt. Todd Van Orsdel, a civil affairs team leader for Company C, 445th Civil Affairs Battalion, and native of Minneapolis.

“The city council does a lot of great things,” Van Orsdel said. “The problem is that information is not getting down to the people. The people want that information. People want to be part of the process and

they want to hear from their personal city councilman.”

Van Orsdel said the Coalition Soldiers are trying to help the council by letting the locals know what their leaders are doing for them, but it is something he is encouraging the council members to start doing.

“The next step that we (hope to do) when we go out and meet the villagers is to be able to take their city council leader with us, just as we do a military mission where the (Iraqi Army) is the tip of the spear and we are behind them in a supporting role,” he said. “We need to do the same thing with the local politicians -- where they are out there meeting the people and we are behind them in a supporting role.”

The council members still have work to do, but Van Orsdel said he has seen a lot of change in Iraq and knows that the Iraqi leaders are working to improve their country.

“A year ago today you wouldn’t have an Iraqi company commander and (city council member) working hand in hand, and you wouldn’t have a city council member that comes to a meeting with a prewritten agenda of what they want to accomplish and what they want to talk about,” he said.

“They’re focused on where they want to go and the Coalition has been a big part of that,” Van Orsdel said. “It was through our guidance that they got there, but it is the Iraqi people themselves that

have done this and we celebrate all their successes.”

The changes that the Iraqi people and Coalition Soldiers have endured to better the country and develop their government and military did not happen over night and Van Orsdel said he knows with continued combined efforts the Iraqis will be prepared to run their country without the Coalition’s help.

“We move slowly sometimes, but we constantly move towards them being able to stand on their own in a legitimate and safe secure government, so some day we can all go home,” he said.



A city councilman from the area of Al-Abarra, Iraq, writes notes during a meeting of local Iraqi leaders Aug. 11. Coalition Soldiers have been mentoring and providing advice to the Iraqi leadership as they develop their government.

EOD • KEEPING IRAQ • CLEAR OF UXOS

Story, photos by Staff Sgt. Matthew Acosta
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

For years, Iraq has been the center of many political, ethnic and military battles by both domestic origin and foreign countries. The constant state of unrest and military-like aggression has left Iraq with an underlying problem not easily recognized by the naked eye.

Years of constant military actions and maneuvers has lead to a build-up of ammunition supply depots and storage facilities. Over the years, these facilities, some abandoned, have fallen into the hands of warring tribal sects, black-market salesmen and terrorists.

Thousands of tons of weapons, munitions and landmines remain unaccounted for, strewn about the country; some lost, some purposefully hidden in weapons caches waiting to be used for attacks by insurgents.

Since the war in Iraq started, these "missing" weapons and munitions have begun to show their presence.

These weapons are not only being used in attacks on Coalition forces, insurgents are using them in attacks against their own people placing improvised explosive devices and vehicle borne improvised explosive devices in populated areas in order to derail the forward progress of Iraq.

Iraqi political leaders, Iraqi military and police forces, as well as innocent civilians, have been targeted and killed by insurgents.

Since the surfacing of these explosives, the need for safe disposal or

neutralization of these weapons has been the duty of skilled military personnel.

Both Army and Air Force explosive ordnance disposal units have been tasked with diffusing and disposal of these weapons and explosives when encountered or confiscated by Coalition Forces.

Airmen assigned to the 506th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron stationed in Kirkuk, Iraq, are responsible for a large portion of EOD calls in Iraq.

"Out of all the EOD units in Iraq, our unit is responsible for the largest area," said Air Force Technical Sgt. Steven Stillings, EOD technician, 506th ECES, Task Force Liberty.

Since the unit's arrival in country, its technicians have responded to many calls, sometimes working in 24-hour shifts.

"There are some days where we're out all night on several IED calls and we get back to the FOB in time for breakfast, only to go back out again on another IED call, or have to go out to a weapons cache that was found," said Stillings.

Then there are times the unit responds to a call that turns out to be a cache of non-lethal rubbish.

"Trash piles, mounds of dirt and parked cars have all been suspected of containing explosives placed by insurgents, and in either case must be approached with caution," said Stillings. "We can spend a few hours at a scene, and get nothing, just garbage; something someone dumped during the night. Then there are calls where we're there just an hour or so and come away with a few artillery rounds."

EOD units have several options to neutralize the threat of explosives when encountering them. While EOD units in one area of Iraq may deal mostly with IEDs or unexploded ordnance units in other areas need to be prepared to deal with the daily threat from VBIEDs; vehicles loaded with ordnance used to drive close to a target before detonation.

The 761st Ordnance Company EOD stationed in Tikrit, Iraq, can get several calls a day, many of them being VBIEDs.

"We get everything from UXO calls on post to known IED sites or VBIEDs abandoned or discovered on the side of the road in town," said Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Robar, EOD team leader, 761st Ordnance Company EOD, Task Force Liberty.

As with any EOD unit, anytime the team responds to a call, it needs to be prepared for anything. These specialized units are equipped with an array of advanced tools ranging from specialized Gerber folding knives to high-tech robots to help disarm any potential threat.

"We use the Talon EOD robot to search and inspect suspected IED and VBIED sites," Sgt. Christopher Taul, EOD technician, 761st Ordnance Co. EOD. "While keeping a stand-off distance, we can visually inspect the threat area through several cameras mounted on the robot's arms."

"The Talon allows our team members to disarm potential threats without exposing anyone to the dangers inherent in an IED or other explosives," said Spc. Joseph Bryant, EOD technician, 761st Ordnance Co. EOD.

With this stand-off ability, the unit can neutralize a threat by disarming it or by destroying it after civilians have been evacuated, without being in harm's way.

Although proven a valuable tool for these units, they are not immune to problems.

"We can use the robot to disarm or detonate the IED or if a problem arises we can do it the old fashioned way," said Airman 1st Class Anthony Sennhenn, EOD Tech, 506th ECES. "Walk up in a bomb suit and do it by hand."

Taul said that sometimes the robots don't work out well and at times they may encounter radio signal interference making controlling the robot difficult, or simply they just break down from frequent use.

He said they also might not be able to see into certain areas like the trunk of the car or under the hood, so using the robot, they place a low power "water charge" in the vehicle to blast open the doors, trunk and hood of the vehicle to gain visual access.

"We place a small charge of explosives with bottles of water around it to blow open the vehicle; it blows the doors, trunk, hood and sometimes even the roof gets peeled back," said Taul. "This makes the vehicle easier to work with because we can now deploy the robot back to the scene to inspect the areas we couldn't see before as we search for the bomb."

Once the vehicle is "opened-up," the EOD team leader decides if the vehicle should be blown in place or if the explosive device could be dismantled on site with either the robot or manually.

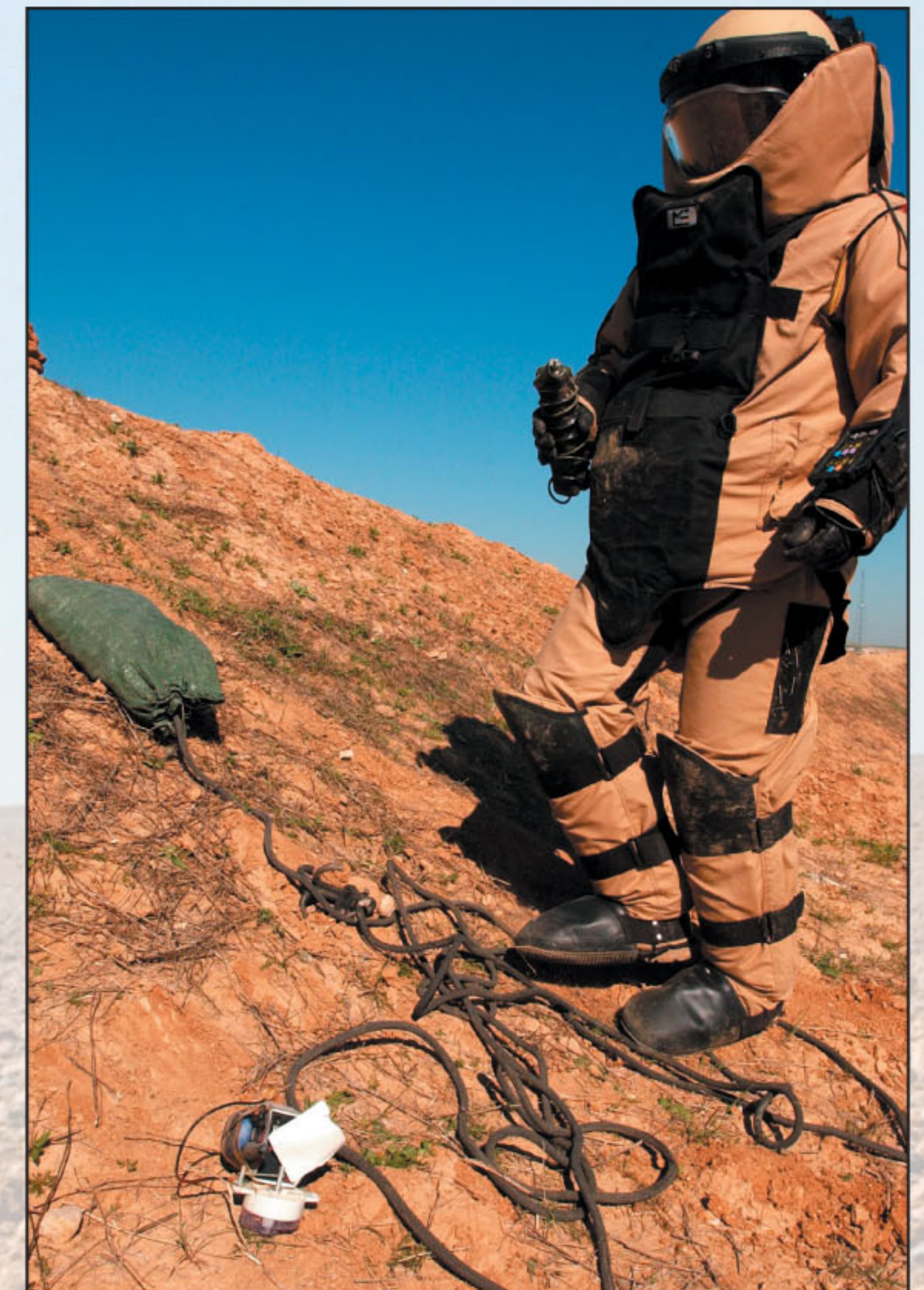
"There are times when (the team leader) has to get into the bomb suit to approach the bomb," Taul said. "You never want to have to do that; that's man-on-target for the insurgents, but sometimes there's no other way."

"You can replace a robot easily," Bryant said, "but you can't replace a team leader, a friend."

Unexploded IEDs or VBIEDs can provide the EOD technicians with valuable information and may lead to the apprehension of insurgents who may have built or set it in place.

"If we can disarm it (IED or VBIED) then we can walk away with a lot of intelligence about the person who built it and their abilities, what materials they used and what country the ordnance came from," Taul said. "It helps us to understand the nature of the beast and how to defeat it."

In the event an explosive device detonates, the team is dis-



Air Force Staff Sgt. Nate Wills, explosive ordnance disposal team sergeant, 506th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron, recovers a Motorola radio (foreground) after disarming an improvised explosive device. Insurgents use the radios to detonate the IEDs when Coalition Forces are in the blast radius.

patched to investigate the scene to determine what type of explosives were used and how they were put together and placed within the vehicle.

"Part of our mission is the blast analysis investigation," said Robar. "We check the crater size and depth to figure out what size explosive was used and see if we can determine how it was put together to gauge the insurgent's abilities."

According to Robar, some insurgents are quite proficient in their trade; however, with the technological advancements in the ordnance trade, EOD units combined with Coalition and Iraqi army units, are keeping the insurgency from gaining the upper hand and controlling supply routes or intimidating the local civilians.

With every EOD call, important intelligence is gathered on the enemy, making Coalition Forces safer and bringing them closer to those who plant explosives targeting military, government and local officials as well as innocent civilians.

"We protect the force with our lives," Bryant said. "It's a dangerous job, but we love it."



Air Force Airman 1st Class Anthony Sennhenn, EOD technician, 506th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron, unloads "Vanessa," a remote-controlled F6-A EOD bomb disarming robot for use in disarming an improvised explosive device found near a road used by Coalition Forces.

Physical therapy eases Soldiers aches, pains at FOB Speicher

Story, photos by Sgt. Daniel W. Bailey
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Tikrit, Iraq – The daily grind of a year-long deployment in Iraq can take a toll on a Soldier's body, often leaving them run down or sore.

The medics in the physical therapy clinic of the 228th Combat Surgical Hospital at Forward Operating Base Speicher are helping Task Force Liberty Soldiers massage out the kinks.

"Here we're running an outpatient clinic seeing anywhere from 20-40 patients in a given day," said Staff Sgt. Thomas Leach, non-commissioned officer in charge of the physical therapy clinic. "We screen a lot of patients for different orthopedic injuries such as sprained ankles, twisted knees and bad shoulders."

A lot of patients are referred to the clinic by a doctor, but most are walk-ins seeking relief from muscle or joint irritation, Leach said.

"If someone has ankle pain, knee pain or back pain they hear about us from somewhere and they come to the hospital and see us," said Leach a native of Shawnee, Okla. "In this environment, wearing the (interceptor body armor) and walking on the rocks we have a lot of bad backs, backaches and neck strains that are more a result of the environment than any actual real injury."

Leach added that if a walk-in patient needs some kind of medical treatment from a doctor, the sick call area is right next door and they always have access to those doctors as well as an orthopedic surgeon.

The three physical therapy clinic medics along with an occupational therapist who comes in twice-a-week try and ease their patients' injuries by providing them any kind of reprieve and giving them exercises to build up a trouble spot on the body.

"We do a lot of hot packs, cold packs, ultrasounds for inflammation, pain control or muscle strengthening," Leach said, "also a lot of rehab for shoulders and ankles where you increase strength

and stability of the joint. You know, try and increase range of motion through a variety of exercises depending on what the problem is."

Excruciating back pain was almost causing Master Sgt. Kenneth Rempel of the 376th Personnel Support Battalion to pass out when he first came to the physical therapy clinic for treatment. He said he is now able to make it through his day with only mild bouts of discomfort.

"I've been doing regular electro-shock therapy in conjunction with heatpacks and pain medication," said Rempel, a native of Cypress, Calif., who was training for the Hawaii Iron Man Triathlon when he was activated last year. "My pain has gone from a nine to a two or three on the pain scale."

Aside from treating orthopedic injuries at the clinic, Sgt. Charles Gallego, an orthopedic technician, along with Spc. Bryan Myers, a combat medic on loan from the sick call clinic, make casts and moldings of splints and inserts for Soldiers' boots to help prevent injuries.

"Working in the PT clinic, I'm learning how to do casts and make inserts for Soldiers from Sgt. Gallego," said Myers, a resident of Bowie, Texas. "It's more hands-on and you get to meet a lot of interesting people, which to me is just a lot more fun."

Leach said he feels that most Soldiers would benefit from some sort of physical therapy.

"Anytime you put an extra 40 to 50 pounds of gear on somebody it's going to take its toll. You would think that by now they would be used to wearing it, but what is going on is a breaking-down process," Leach said. "It's just a lot of stress on their body that over time will cause Soldiers eventually to start to break down."

Leach said the only true thing that will help prevent the need for physical therapy is to promote a high level of physical fitness.

"Continuing to do physical training is always going to be good for you," he said. "The better health condition you're in, the less likely you are to get injured and have to pay us a visit."



Sgt. Charles Gallego, an orthopedic technician at the 228th Combat Surgical Hospital, makes a molding to go into a Soldier's boot at the 228th CSH physical therapy clinic July 12 on Forward Operating Base Speicher.



Staff Sgt. Thomas Leach helps Sgt. Deanna Halley, Company B, 467th Engineer Battalion, with some exercises to strengthen her shoulder July 12, at the physical therapy clinic at the 228th Combat Surgical Hospital on Forward Operating Base Speicher in Tikrit, Iraq.

Fighting to return to war

Soldier defies doctors, comes back from serious injury to finish deployment

Story, photo by Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Tikrit, Iraq – After an accident in February caused his humvee to overturn and throw him out, doctors told the Task Force Liberty Soldier that it would take him a year to recover from his injury and that he would not be able to rejoin his unit in Iraq.

But that didn't stop Spc. William Boyd, it only made him strive harder to defy the doctors' diagnosis and return to Iraq in June to finish out his deployment.

Boyd is a communication and electronic repairer, whose unit, Company D, 735th Main Support Battalion, is serving in Iraq at Forward Operating Base Speicher.

He said he felt it was important to return to Iraq because he had been asked to serve and it was his duty to do so.

"The Army had called me up, my nation had called me up to be over here at this time," Boyd said. "They needed me in the job here, so I said, 'You know this part of my life has already been cut out, it has already been set aside to be used by the military and rather than just sit here and heal, I'd rather be over there. If I can function and do the job, then I rather be over there doing the job and doing what I've been asked to do.'"

Boyd said the work he does to keep Soldiers able to communicate is important to the mission here.

"In the Army they say you have to shoot, move and communicate, so communication is one of the main components that the Army needs here in Operation Iraqi Freedom," he said. "Our job here to maintain communications, maintain electronics and keep people ready for their part in the battle, makes it important that we keep the stuff repaired."

Boyd said he went through a lot of surgeries and did a lot of traveling in order to make it back to Iraq.

"I have been in hospitals all over the world because of this," he said. "I started out here at the (combat support hospital) on FOB Speicher. I had two surgeries and they placed an external fixator on my leg."



Specialist William Boyd, a communication and electronics repairer for Company D, 50th Main Support Battalion, shows off the scars on his left leg July 13.

Boyd said the device was screwed into his left leg from the outside in order to hold his bones in place.

He said he was then transferred to Germany where they removed the fixator and placed a titanium rod from his ankle to his knee to stabilize the bone.

After spending a week in Germany, he was transferred to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Maryland.

Boyd then was able to spend 30 days of convalescent leave at home, before starting physical therapy at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.

He battled doctors every step of the way who told him he would not return to Iraq and that he might not even be able to stay in the Army.

"In Germany is where they started telling me it would take me a year to be fully functional, and at Walter Reed they sort of reiterated that," Boyd said. "From the first day that I was here in the hospital, my buddies would come in to see me and I told everybody, 'I'm coming back don't worry. I'll be back here,' and they just thought maybe it was the morphine talking or something."

The doctors along the way had been

telling him that he might be medically discharged from the Army and "that there is no way I'll go back to Iraq, but I told them all 'No, I am going to be fine. I am going to heal and I am going to go back,'" Boyd said.

The Soldier's supervisor, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Roger Groves said he didn't think they would see Boyd back with the unit in Iraq.

"Finding out the severity of his injury, I figured that he had a one-way ticket home and wouldn't be coming back and finishing up the tour," Groves said. "His injury was severe enough that I just didn't think that he'd get healed up in time to come back and finish out."

Groves said the Soldiers in the unit kept in touch with Boyd and knew of his plans to come back, but they were not betting on seeing him back in Iraq.

"We kept up contact with him through e-mail," Groves said. "He told us he was going to be back. We told him, 'You might think in your mind your going to come back, but I don't think the doctors are going to let you come back,' but he fooled everybody, he got healed up . . ." And he came back.

Groves said it is nice having Boyd back, not just because they need his help with the work load, but because he is an all-around good guy.

"Specialist Boyd is an outstanding Soldier," Groves said. "He is somebody that other Soldiers could strive to become. He is dedicated. He believes in what we are doing here. He is just an all-around American young man. I am sure glad to have him back."

Boyd said his story might seem special because he fought the odds to come back to Iraq, but he isn't the only Soldier with a story to tell.

"Every Soldier who is out here is really a story to tell," he said. "There is something about selfless service and making a sacrifice that people who haven't made that sacrifice can't possibly understand."

"What we have gone through, not only that, but our families back home, they make a sacrifice, they know what it is like to have Soldiers over here," he said. "So I would say that while my story is somewhat unique, everybody has a unique story of serving their country and doing their part in Operation Iraqi Freedom."

IA, Coalition train, fight side-by-side

Story, photos by
Staff Sgt. Raymond Drumsta
42nd Infantry Division Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SUMMERALL, Bayji, Iraq – Behind the walls of an old British fort here, and in the area around the base, a Pennsylvania Army National Guard unit with roots in the American Revolution is helping Iraq secure its own nationhood - by training, and fighting alongside its soldiers.

Through success, setback and loss, troops of Company A, 1st Battalion, 111th Infantry, and Company C, 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade, 4th Iraqi Army Division, have shared the frustrations - and rewards - of this mission.

"They possess the willingness to be in the Iraqi army," said Sgt. James Mostiller, a Company A team leader from Philadelphia. "What they need is more help. One company is not going to do it for Bayji."

One 2nd Brigade Combat Team Soldier said the Iraqis will surprise you.

"Sometimes you'll train them on a task, and they don't seem to get it," said Staff Sgt. Jonathan Flynn, a Company A squad leader from Levittown, Pa. "Then you'll go out on a mission, and they'll do it perfectly. They'll surprise you sometimes."

The Iraqi troops use the training they

receive in the fight against the insurgents. Almost daily, the Iraqi and American soldiers mount humvees and pick-up trucks and roll out of the gate, departing the base to patrol, man traffic-control points, or check infrastructure like power lines - a new mission recently added to the soldiers' battery of tasks.

Company A began training and performing combat operations with the Iraqi soldiers in February. In May, they certified the Iraqi soldiers in squad-level missions, and now they're training them to take on platoon and company-level operations.

"It's frustrating, but you're taking people with literally no experience and training them to be platoon sergeants and squad leaders," said Staff Sgt. Chad Bruckner, a Company A squad leader from Horsham, Pa.

The Iraqis perform well, Flynn said.

"At a squad level they perform pretty decently ... like building clearing, raids and that type of thing," he said.

In March, with Coalition Forces support, the Iraqi soldiers pulled off a two-pronged raid, netting both targets - a weapons cache and a known terrorist, Bruckner said.

"They hit the targets simultaneously," he said. "We got the man and we got the target. I thought, 'We can make a difference.'"

Other victories followed, including the capture of insurgent Samir Yasin Taha in July - a successful platoon-level operation owed entirely to Iraqi soldiering and leadership, Mostiller said.

"They led the briefing and led the patrol," he said. "We allowed them to do everything. They did a great job and accomplished the mission."

However, refining the Iraqi unit's ability to execute platoon and company-level operations has been hit by difficulties beyond either the Coalition or Iraqi soldiers' control - like leadership changes, a developing logistics system and a fledgling Iraqi noncommissioned officer corps.

"They still have a long way to go," Flynn said. "The NCO corps needs a lot of work. You can't build an American sergeant in a year, and you can't build an Iraqi sergeant in a year, either."

The state of the Iraqi NCO corps is part of Saddam Hussein's legacy, Bruckner said.

"The NCO corps is their biggest challenge," he said. "They have to step up and take responsibility."

"The biggest thing missing here is NCO leadership," said Sgt. Craig Fisher, a medic with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 103rd Armor. "They need to understand what the NCO-corps concept is - and use it."

Fisher, along with fellow unit member and medic Staff Sgt. Jon Siennick of Harrisburg, Pa., mans the aid station in the Iraqi army compound within the base where the Iraqi soldiers train and operate from. In addition to creating medical records for the Iraqi soldiers, they conducted first-aid training and had tasks translated into Arabic.



A soldier in the Company C, 1st Battalion quick-reaction force helps secure a unexploded ordnance site near Forward Operating Base Summerall, Iraq.

"Everything we do here we do so the Iraqi soldiers can do it on their own," Siennick said. "People think Iraq is Arizona - it's not. There is no healthcare system here."

The medics recently certified nine Iraqi soldiers as combat life-savers. They plan to certify others, and are training combat medics. Two of the Iraqi medics used their training to treat family members, Fisher said.

"That's very rewarding," Fisher said. "They hugged me and thanked me."

The Iraqi soldiers are very hungry for knowledge and very willing to learn, he added.

"They're excited Saddam

Hussein is no longer here," he said. "They're not stupid - they just don't do things our way. They're willing to change. They just need help to do that."

Differing Iraqi dialects and tribal loyalties make training a challenge, the medics said. Company A Soldiers use tribal conflicts among Iraqi troops as a teaching tool about unit loyalty, and though conflict has abated somewhat, it's an ongoing struggle, Fisher said.

"We tell them that the Iraqi army is a tribe and that they're a band of brothers," Fisher said. "It sounds like a cliché, but it's true."

Company A conducts remedial training at every opportunity, Bruckner said.

"These problems are not any more outlandish than in other armies," Bruckner said. "They may need more work, but their problems are no different."

"The American soldiers keep repeating the same information until they're sure we've got the picture," said Staff Sgt. Jamal Ahmed, of Company C. "It's not a problem. We train, rehearse, then apply what we learned on the streets of Bayji."

Lanky and confident, Ahmed sports a wide grin when he talks. He is 21 years old and joined the Iraqi army early this year.

"I like the army," he said. "All my friends

are here in this company. We get great joy from training together and fighting the insurgency together." He was promoted quickly, he added, because he picked up the training fast.

"NCOs guarantee the flow of information in the chain of command," he said. "The NCOs make sure the soldiers get the information and also make sure they're applying it. He observes his soldiers' strengths and weaknesses so he 'can correct them and show them how to do things,' he said.

It's easy to lead, and an honor, said Company C soldier Cpl. Nazhan Ali.

"I am showing my skills and doing my duty for Bayji," he said.

Mostiller said he is proud of the Iraqi soldiers, and laments that they have to cover their faces while on patrol.

"It's easy for me to be a soldier because I don't live in the towns I patrol," he said. "They have a lot of spirit and heart. It's a shame that they have to cover their faces for fear that they or their families will be attacked."

Some of the Iraqi soldiers are poor, some are farmers, Bruckner said - but they joined the army to defend their country.

"They believe in doing something great," he said.

The American and Iraqi soldiers get along well, Ali said.

"We are friends and we are joking with each other all the time," he said.

Some of the Coalition Soldiers have learned Arabic words, Ahmed said, and soldiers of both nations also communicate with gestures and tones.

"They know what we mean without translation," Ahmed said.

Bruckner agreed.

"I've gotten pretty close to Iraqi army soldiers," said Bruckner. "The other guys bust on me for hanging out with them, but I have a lot in common with them. They ask me about America and I ask them about their homes in Bayji. They're friendly and outgoing, and that's the way I am. They're very giving.

I admire them as well."

Both units have suffered casualties. In August, Company A lost four soldiers in an IED attack.

"They came to do this mission, and we leave the base to do missions together," Ahmed said. "This is enough to create a strong relationship between us."

Though part of Task Force Dragoon, Company A's organic unit stateside is 1st Battalion, 111th Infantry, originally organized by Benjamin Franklin. The mission here continues, despite difficulties and the loss of both Iraqi and Coalition Soldiers. Being part of "the main focus here" is rewarding, Flynn said.

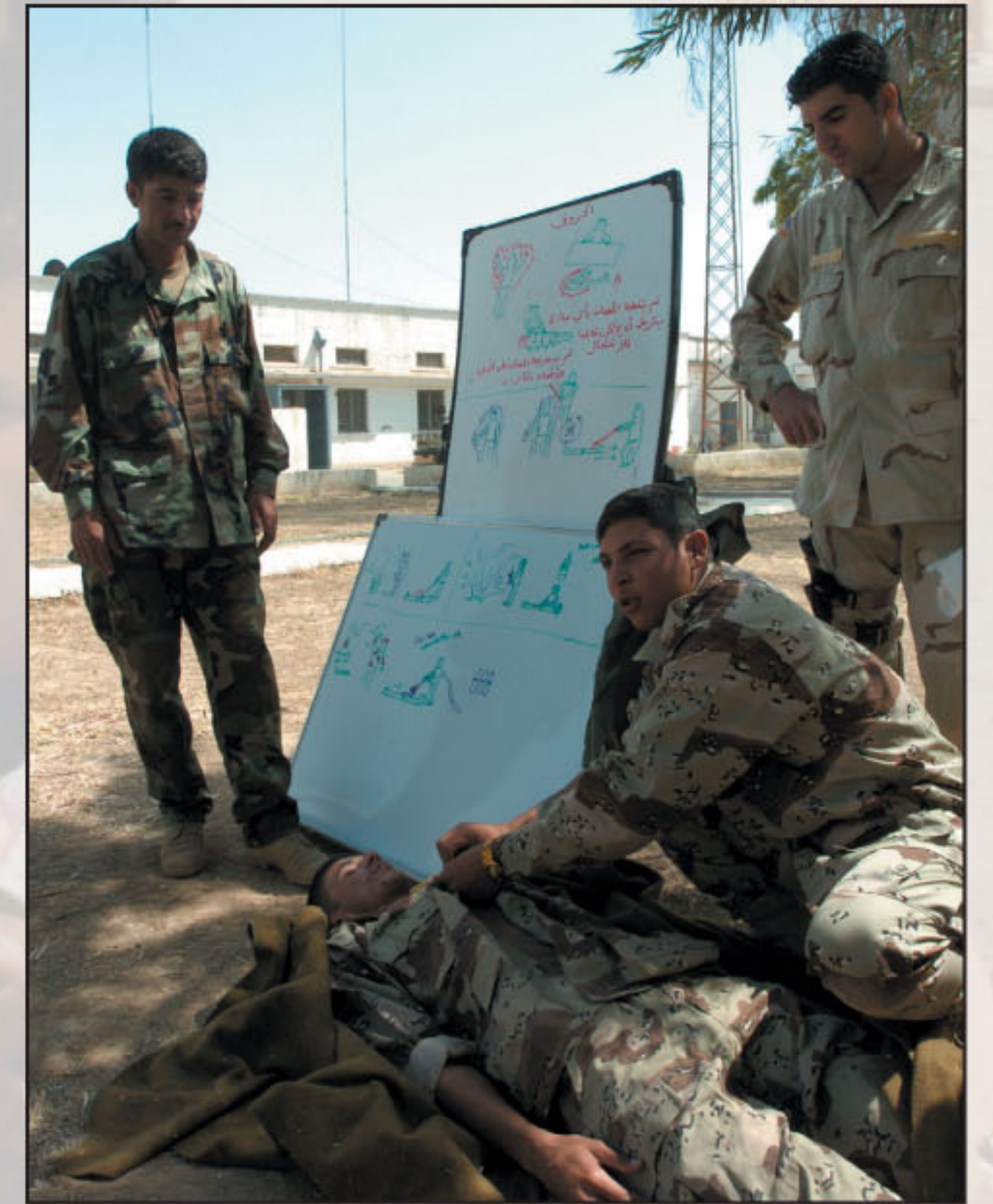
"The goal is to help build a country and build their army," he said. "We've actually taken part in that."

Bruckner said the troops believe in what they are doing.

"We all believe in the mission," he said. "We all put in extra hours."

Ahmed said his unit is trying hard because the Coalition won't stay here forever.

"We're trying to get as much experience as we can from the American Army," said Ahmed, "because they are not going to be here forever."



Soldiers of Company C, 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade, 4th Iraqi Army Division, conduct first-aid classes at Forward Operating Base Summerall. The soldiers train and execute combat operations in the surrounding area.



A soldier of Company C, 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade, 4th Iraqi Army Division, bounds forward on a live-fire range at Forward Operating Base Summerall.

Mechanics provide high level maintenance

by Staff Sgt. Duane M. Brown
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DANGER, Tikrit, Iraq – Mechanics at Forward Operating Base Danger know they have one unit looking out for them, keeping them off the road and relieving them from performing vehicle evacuation missions.

The 50th Maintenance Support Team, 50th Main Support Battalion, provides direct support maintenance to the Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 42nd Infantry Division, motor pool, replacing engines, transmissions and all repairs that are above organizational-level maintenance.

“If they weren’t here, there would be a lot of deadlined vehicles, with the only chance of repair at FOB Speicher,” said Sgt. 1st Class Edgar A. Ponce, motor sergeant, HHC motor pool. “But with them here, if there is a problem we are unable to resolve, we submit a work order to them.”

To evacuate vehicles to Speicher requires Ponce to task out 50 percent of his work force to complete the mission.

“The job they do is great,” Ponce said. “With some of their mechanics being technicians for the military in the U.S., the 50th doesn’t just go in and change out parts, they trouble shoot what’s wrong and work from there.”

While completing the Army’s missions, MST noncommissioned officers take advantage of opportunity training for professional development.

“We don’t just train our Soldiers to replace parts. We want them to understand why things are broken so they can trouble shoot a problem and fix it,” said Sgt. Neville R. Link, team leader, 50th

MST. “Anyone can go in and change parts, my six-year-old grandson can change out car parts. I want my guys to maximize their potential as professional Soldiers.”

All jobs that come through the 50th MST shop begin with organizational-level checks.

“Checks aren’t finished until 50th MST standards are met,” Link said. “By starting at ground level, we are able to identify the nature of the problem, instead of replacing parts.”

This approach to maintenance, troubleshooting problems and replacing defective parts, saves the government and taxpayers money.

“My guys are becoming technical inspectors,” said Sgt. Keith C. Moore, shop supervisor, 50th MST. “We have specialists taking the lead on many of the projects that come through our garage.”

The training provided by Link and Moore has boosted the competence and confidence level of troops that work for them.

“Working here has been a rich experience for me, especially since I just came out of (advanced individual training) this year,” said Spc. Jonathan Gonzalez, mechanic with the 50th MST. “Now when I get back to the U.S. and settle into my unit, I am confident that I can perform any duty or job that needs to be done.”

The 50th MST has completed more than 230 jobs during its time on FOB Danger while in a tent, with no air-conditioning and temperatures as high as 130 degrees.

“Our mechanics are doing an outstanding job. The thing that sticks out most in my mind is that when we are out here together, doing our thing, the heat isn’t even a factor; because that is the way we roll. Mission first,” Moore said.

“We don’t just train our Soldiers to replace parts. We want them to understand why things are broken so they can trouble shoot a problem and fix it.”

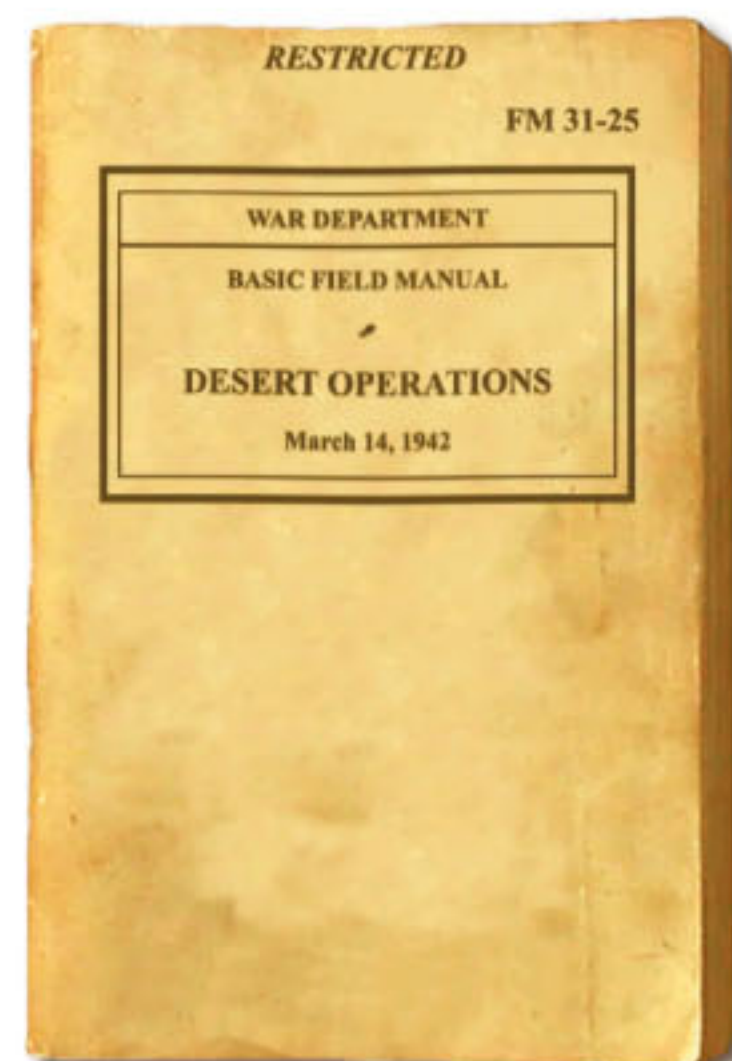
**Sgt. Neville R. Link
Team Leader
50th Maintenance Support Team**

**The enemy
regularly changes
his tactics.**

Do you?



STAY ALIVE



IEDs KILL

0003

IA takes control of FOB Dagger

by Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.
1st BCT Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DAGGER, Tikrit, Iraq – The 1st Brigade Combat Team recently received an Iraqi unit that was tasked with assuming control of Forward Operating Base Dagger. Before leaving the FOB, Coalition Forces performed a relief in place with the new Iraqi units.

“These guys are the 4th Iraqi Division, they are the higher headquarters for the brigade that the 1st BCT is partnered with,” said Maj. Robert M. Butts, executive officer for the 1/3 Brigade Troops Battalion. “Anytime you have a unit that relieves another unit, you should do a relief in place. You typically spend some time shadowing them, and when you feel they are ready to handle a mission, you let them have the driver’s seat.”

Part of the RIP for the Iraqis was an exercise in force protection, more specifically reacting to indirect and direct fire attacks.

“We let the Iraqis react to something that we planned for them, to be assured that they are ready to assume the security of the FOB,” Butts said.

“This mission helps protect from any kind of direct or indirect attack,” said an Iraqi officer. “After the first rehearsal, we were surprised. The soldiers went directly to their assigned positions very quickly. They expressed excitement in being able to do this mission.”

Coalition Forces got a chance to work directly with the Iraqis who were replacing them. The Iraqis needed to be shown how the Task Force Liberty Soldiers provided security for the FOB during their stay at FOB Dagger.

“For the last three days, we have been sharing the guard posts with the Iraqis,” Butts said.

Coalition Forces and Iraqis shared the responsibilities of FOB defense, with the Iraqis assuming more and more control as the days went on, Butts said.

Showing the Iraqis how to defend the FOB and making sure they were capable of the task was a vital part in relinquishing control of the installation.

The Iraqi soldiers’ performance was more than satisfactory, and the Task Force Liberty Soldiers knew it was time to let the Iraqis control the FOB on their own.

“Once we observed their reaction during the exercise, and their leaders’ involvement in the mission, we felt very confident that they would be able to defend themselves,” Butts said.

Taking over FOB Dagger held a deeper meaning for the Iraqis than just assuming control of an installation. The Iraqis felt like it was a step in solidifying their identity, and getting a chance to be a part of the development of a better nation.

“They have a heightened sense of patriotism, and they want to feel like they are a part of one nation,” an Iraqi officer said. “In our division, we have Kurds, Sunni and Shia. No one complains. We all get along, and that is important to the development of our country. We want to show the world that we are one nation, and a great nation.”



Col. Mark E. McKnight, 1st Brigade Combat Team commander, speaks during a Transfer of Ownership ceremony at Forward Operating Base Dagger August 14.

A/C installers keep vehicles running cool

by Staff Sgt. Duane M. Brown
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, Iraq – Mo’ Money Air Conditioning and one U.S. Soldier keep troops cool during missions, despite high temperatures in Kirkuk, Iraq.

As a Department of Defense contractor, Mo’ Money Air Conditioning provides free services to Forward Operating Base Warrior and any Coalition Forces personnel needing support.

“Aside from being a luxury, having A/C units is vital to the physical well-being of the soldier,” said Cpt. Elijah L. Preston, battalion signal officer, 3rd Battalion, 116th Armor, and native of The Dalles, Ore. “With extreme temperatures here, having air conditioning inside vehicles gives them time to lower their body temperatures.”

“Temperatures in northern Iraq reach 130 degrees or higher, and with up-armored vehicles all enclosed, it’s really important,” Preston added.

Mo’ Money specializes in the area of installation and repair in Humvee series M998, M1025 and M114.

Having an area of expertise doesn’t limit their drive to help those who need it.

“We will install or repair any vehicle that has air conditioning,” said German Carrillo, field service technician, DOD contractor for Mo’ Money and native of El Paso, TX.

With such a high demand for service, Mo’ Money has added Spc. Josh Stanek, heating and air conditioning technician, 2nd Battalion, 116th Armor. He has been with them for the past four months.

“It’s great working with Stanek,” said Carrillo. “As time progressed, we have not only become friends, he has gained the knowledge to go back to his unit and do this type of operation on his own.”

Having a background in heating and air conditioning repair is ideal for this situation.

“When I first got here, I was working at the maintenance shop. Then one day Mo’ Money asked for some help and I came over,” Stanek said. “We have both learned from each other. It’s a good combo working with the military.”

Stanek said, the major reoccurring problems are busted lines and wear and tear. These problems are the result of constant use.

“I think we are doing very well here. We are all caught-up and no one has any complaints about our work,” Stanek added.



EYES ON THE PRIZE

**MSB Soldiers
maintain sharp
watch to keep
FOB safe**

Story, photo by Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Tikrit, Iraq – Some 50th Main Support Battalion Soldiers are daily placing themselves between insurgents and Coalition Forces working on Forward Operating Base Speicher, Tikrit, Iraq.

These Soldiers stand watch at Observation Point 6, making sure only authorized personnel and equipment enter the base.

Specialist Sean Moore, gunner for Company C, 50th MSB, from East Orange, N.J., said while on guard duty at OP 6, it is their job to scan the base's perimeter and engage the enemy if necessary.

"We are looking for people trying to infiltrate the post," Moore said. "We are looking for trucks that might have possible (improvised explosive devices)."

First Lt. John Rodriguez, officer in charge of OP 6 and native of New York, N.Y., said the job his Soldiers are doing is important.

"They are the ones who are actually out there making sure that

nothing comes through those gates, and making sure that everybody is safe at this FOB," Rodriguez said.

Moore said sometimes the guard duty can seem long and tedious, but the Soldiers must always be prepared for anything.

"It takes a lot of mental discipline," he said. "It takes patience because sometimes it can get kind of repetitive out here, so you just have to be on your guard at all times and just pay attention to detail. Once you do not pay attention to detail then that is when somebody can overrun the checkpoint."

The work they do is essential, Moore said.

"We are protecting the people that are inside the FOB during the day and their safety is important to us at OP 6," he said.

Rodriguez said his Soldiers have been doing a great job in monitoring the personnel, vehicles and equipment that are entering the base.

"We have yet to have anybody come into this FOB that can use anything (against us)," he said. "Bottom line, nothing has come through this OP, so I think it has been a success and I owe it all to the Soldiers who work at this OP."

No matter what the conditions or how many hours they have to work, Rodriguez said his Soldiers are always up for mission at hand.

"It is about 130 degrees, and they are still wearing (their inter-ceptor body armor) with their weapons and everything else," Rodriguez said. "These guys are working out there and if they are asked to work later than what they are supposed to they don't ask why, they just go ahead and do it. They are truly professionals."



Sgt. Charles Hanson, with Company A, 50th Main Support Battalion, checks for identification at Observation Point 6 at Forward Operating Base Speicher, Tikrit, Iraq.

Never Forget

The Soldiers serving in the Multinational Division North Central, Iraq are an important part of the Task Force Liberty team. We will always remember our fallen heroes.

Staff Sgt. Todd Olson 1st Bn. 128th Inf. Regt. Samarra, Iraq Dec. 27	Sgt. 1st Class Robbie D. McNary 1st Bn., 163rd Armor Hawijah, Iraq March 31	Sgt. John B. Ogburn III 3rd Bn., 116th Armor Kirkuk, Iraq May 22	Spc. Robert E. Hall 467th Eng., 1st BCT Ad Dujayl, Iraq June 28	Spc. Gennaro Pellegrini Jr. 1st Bn., 111th Inf. Regt. Bayji, Iraq August 9
Sgt. 1st Class Mark C. Warren 3rd Bn., 116th Armor FOB Warrior, Iraq Jan. 31	Sgt. 1st Class Stephen C. Kennedy 1st Sq., 278th Cav. Balad Ruz, Iraq April 4	Sgt. Alfred B. Siler 278th RSS, 278th RCT Tuz, Iraq May 25	Sgt. Manny Hornedo 50th MSB, DISCOM Tikrit, Iraq June 28	Sgt. Francis J. Straub Jr. 1st Bn., 111th Inf. Regt. Bayji, Iraq August 9
Staff Sgt. Steven Bayow 2nd Bn., 7th Inf. Regt. Bayji, Iraq Feb. 4	Staff Sgt. Kevin D. Davis Troop G, 82nd Cav. Hawijah, Iraq April 8	CW4 Matthew S. Lourey 1st Bn., 17th Cav. Buhritz, Iraq May 27	Spc. Christopher W. Dickison 2nd Bn., 34th Armor Baqubah, Iraq July 5	1st Lt. David L. Giaimo 2nd Bn., 7th Inf. Regt. Tikrit, Iraq August 12
Sgt. Daniel Torres 2nd Bn., 7th Inf. Regt. Bayji, Iraq Feb. 4	Spc. Aleina Ramirez-Gonzalez 3rd BTB, 1st BCT Tikrit, Iraq April 15	CW2 Joshua M. Scott 1st Bn., 17th Cav. Buhritz, Iraq May 27	Sgt. 1st Class Ronald T. Wood 1st Battery, 148th FA Rushad, Iraq July 16	Staff Sgt. Asbury F. Hawn II 3rd Sq., 278th Cav. Tuz, Iraq August 14
Sgt. Rene Knox Jr. 5th Bn., 30th Inf. Regt. Balad, Iraq Feb. 13	Pfc. Steven F. Sirko 1st Bn., 30th Inf. Regt. Muqadiyah, Iraq April 17	Sgt. 1st Class Virgil R. Case 145 Support Bn., 116th Armor Kirkuk, Iraq June 1	Staff Sgt. Frank Tiai 100th Bn., 442nd Inf. Balad, Iraq July 17	Spc. Gary L. Reese Jr. 3rd Sq., 278th Cav. Tuz, Iraq August 14
Sgt. Chad Lake 5th Bn., 7th Cav. Regt. Balad, Iraq Feb. 13	Spc. David L. Rice 1st Battery, 5th FA Muqadiyah, Iraq April 26	Cpl. Randall D. Preusse Co. A, 386th Eng. Bn Davilla, Texas June 5	Sgt. Christopher J. Taylor 1st Battery, 41st FA Balad, Iraq July 24	Sgt. Shannon D. Taylor 3rd Sq., 278th Cav. Tuz, Iraq August 14
Spc. Dakotah Gooding 5th Bn., 7th Cav. Balad, Iraq Feb. 13	Sgt. Timothy C. Kiser 116th Engineers Hawijah, Iraq April 28	Spc. Carrie L. French 145th Support Bn., 116th Armor Kirkuk, Iraq June 5	Spc. Adam J. Harting 3rd Bn., 69th Armor Samarra, Iraq July 25	Spc. Ray Fuhrmann II 3rd Bn., 69th Armor Samarra, Iraq August 18
Pfc. David J. Brangman 3rd Bn., 69th Armor Patrol Base Uvanni, Iraq Feb. 13	Sgt. Gary A. Eckert Jr. 983rd En. Samarra, Iraq June 8	Capt. Philip T. Esposito HHC, 42nd Inf. Div. Tikrit, Iraq June 8	Spc. Edward L. Myers 3rd Bn., 69th Armor Samarra, Iraq July 27	Pfc. Timothy Seamans 3rd Bn., 69th Armor Samarra, Iraq August 18
Sgt. 1st Class David Salie 2nd Bn., 69th Armor Baqubah, Iraq Feb. 14	Spc. Steven R. Givens 1st Bn., 15th Inf. Regt. Samarra, Iraq May 8	1st Lt. Louis E. Allen HHC, 42nd Inf. Div. Tikrit, Iraq June 8	Pfc. Jason D. Scheuerman 1st Bn., 30th Inf. Regt. Muqadiyah, Iraq July 30	Staff Sgt. Jeremy Doyle 3rd Bn., 69th Armor Samarra, Iraq August 18
Spc. Justin B. Carter 1st Bn., 15th Inf. Regt. FOB McKenzie, Iraq Feb. 16	Sgt. Andrew R. Jodon 3rd Bn., 69th Armor Samarra, Iraq May 12	1st Lt. Michael J. Fasnacht 1st Bn., 15th Inf. Regt. Ad Dwar, Iraq June 8	Sgt. Brahim J. Jeffcoat 1st Bn., 111th Inf. Regt. Balad, Iraq August 6	Spc. Nathan Bouchard 3rd Bn., 69th Armor Samarra, Iraq August 18
Spc. Jacob Palmatier 1st Bn., 30th Inf. Regt. Qaryat, Iraq Feb. 24	Pfc. Travis W. Anderson 2nd Bn., 7th Inf. Regt. Bayji, Iraq May 13	Staff Sgt. Mark O. Edwards 2nd Sq., 278th Cav. Tuz, Iraq June 9	Spc. Kurt E. Krout 1st Bn., 111th Inf. Regt. Balad, Iraq August 6	Staff Sgt. Victoir P. Lieurance 3rd Sq., 278th Cav. Samarra, Iraq August 22
Spc. Adriana Salem 3rd Forward Support Bn. FOB Remagen, Iraq March 4	Pfc. Wesley R. Riggs 2nd Bn., 7th Inf. Regt. Tikrit, Iraq May 17	1st Lt. Noah Harris 2nd Bn., 69th Armor Buhritz, Iraq June 18	Pfc. Nathaniel E. Detample 1st Bn., 111th Inf. Regt. Bayji, Iraq August 9	Sgt. Joseph D. Hunt 3rd Sq., 278th Cav. Samarra, Iraq August 22
Sgt. Paul W. Thomason III 2nd Sq., 278th Cav. Kirkuk, Iraq March 20	Sgt. Carl J. Morgain 1st Bn., 112th Inf. Regt. Kadasia, Iraq May 22	Cpl. William A. Long 2nd Bn., 69th Armor Buhritz, Iraq June 18	Spc. John Kulick 1st Bn., 111th Inf. Regt. Bayji, Iraq August 9	1st Lt. Carlos J. Diaz 2nd Bn., 69th Armor Baqubah, Iraq August 23
		Spc. Charles A. Kaufman 1st Bn., 128th Inf. Regt. Baghdad, Iraq June 26		

First Sgt. William Doherty, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 10 Field Artillery Regiment, discusses the location of a new rebuilding project in Baqubah, Iraq, with the mayor, Khalid Al-Sanjey while Capt. Neil Orechiwsky looks on August 10. (Photo by Sgt. Daniel W. Bailey/22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

